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Volume 69, Number 4 Fall 2018

Sonoma Medicine

The magazine of the Sonoma County Medical Association

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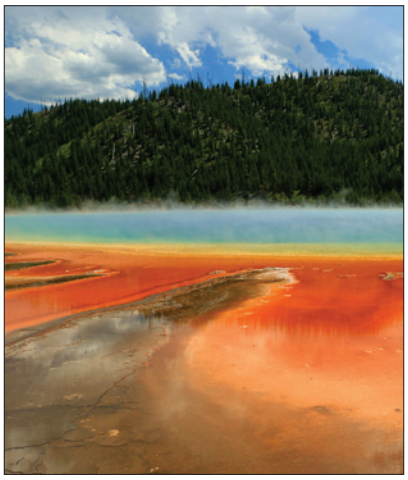

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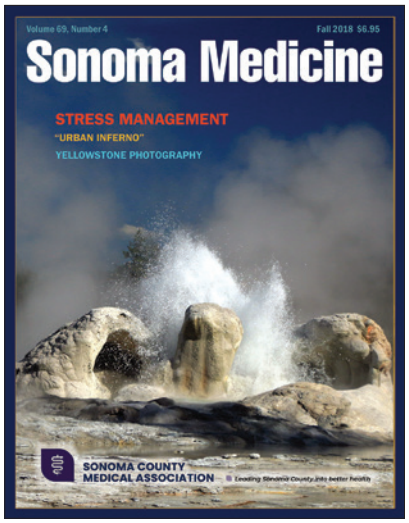

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Sonoma Medicine (ISSN 1534-5386) is the official quarterly magazine of the Sonoma County Medical Association, 2312 Bethards Dr. #6, Santa Rosa, CA 95405. Periodicals postage paid at Santa Rosa, CA, and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Sonoma Medicine,* 2312 Bethards Dr. #6, Santa Rosa, CA 95405.

Opinions expressed by authors are their own, and not necessarily those of *Sonoma Medicine* or the medical association. The magazine reserves the right to edit or withhold advertisements. Publication of an ad does not represent endorsement by the medical association. Email: scma@scma.org.

The subscription rate is $27.80 per year (four quarterly issues). For advertising rates and information, contact Susan Gumucio at 707-525-0102 or susan@scma.org.

www.scma.org

Printed on recycled paper.

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Deep Breaths!

SCMA Members,

Well, isn't this a timely issue? **Stress.** We all battle with stress, whether it is visible to others or not. As I am writing this, we have an Internal Revenue agent here in the office performing a random audit of the SCMA financial records. He plans to be here all week. (Send wine!)

I'm sure we have our books in order, but we still question ourselves, even though we have extremely competent operational controls here at the office. At the moment, we are taking many, many deep breaths! Thankfully, the agent is pleasant enough. Certainly not the "IRS monster" we imagined when we received the official notice of audit. We decided to all dress in bright, happy colors the first day he arrived to help keep our energy high and the mood light in the office. I think it's working!

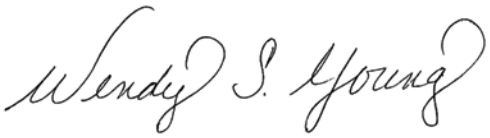
The raging fires in Redding and in Lake and Mendocino counties—gratefully, contained before press time—are a stark reminder of what Santa Rosa experienced just a short year ago. Our hearts go out to our fellow Northern Californians who experienced the devastation and loss that Sonoma County residents know all too well. We reached out to our sister counties to share best practices and lessons learned. SCMA worked with Medtronic and Kaiser for yet another Fire Recovery event held in late September, where stress, anxiety, and PTSD were the focus of the evening.

As you will see, there are several excellent articles in this issue on positive ways to deal with stress: Marin Weight Loss & Wellness Medical Director, Dr. Gail Altschuler, illuminates the relationship between stress and weight management. Biofeedback specialist Peter Behel highlights how our response patterns to stress can be successfully reprogrammed. David Murphy, PhD, weighs in on the relationship between stress and medical treatments. Dr. Brien Seeley reviews *The Book of Highs: 255 Ways to Alter Your Consciousness Without Drugs,* and how it relates to physicians treating patients undergoing stress. There are other excellent articles on topics including the battle against opioid abuse, the Latino Health Forum, Kaiser Permanente's first family medicine residency class, and "Urban Inferno," the film documenting Santa Rosa's 2017 fires.

I hope you can find a nugget or two within these articles to help you and/or your patients with stress as we enter October and all the fire memories that are bound to invade our thoughts.

If I can offer you anything from SCMA, please know that we are here to help you. CMA is working on a very big enterprise designed to help physicians who might feel overwhelmed by work and life get the assistance and tools they need. It is very exciting and I have to sit on my hands not to announce the news here for you! Rest assured, I will share as soon as they give me the "green light"!

Until then, please remember that the SCMA office door is always open to you. Please stop by and say a quick "hello" or stay for a respite, if that is what you need. Remember, life does not have to be perfect to be wonderful. ■



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We Have the Ability to Heal Ourselves

David Murphy, CP, PhD, with *Sonoma Medicine* Staff

"The body heals with play; the mind heals with laughter; and the spirit heals with joy."

Clinical psychologist David Murphy receives referrals from a wide range of physicians in the North Bay to assist in medically oriented psychology. "There are psychological issues related to many medical diagnoses, including cancer, stroke, arthritis, diabetes, COPD, heart failure, and much more," he tells *Sonoma Medicine*. "Stress and depression are often associated with these illnesses. What I do is to employ a variety of techniques to treat the depression. I teach people how to calm their anxiety and fear and focus on healing."

"Depression is a distinct entity linked to the inflammatory process. Inflammation impacts the brain and helps to create depression. As a result, depression often correlates with heart disease, and often results after cardiovascular surgery. However, with the proper tools, the patient can train the body to use its own wisdom to aid in recovery. If you can lessen or eliminate negative thoughts, you can recover better," he says.

Dr. Murphy is a clinical psychologist specialist based in Sebastopol.

Dr. Murphy employs many approaches, including guided imagery, which includes various techniques to lead his patients in imagining sensations and in visualizing images to bring about a desired physical response. This can help reduce stress, anxiety, and pain levels. "Guided imagery, envisioning and anticipating a positive result, not only leads to stress reduction; it also leads to faster recovery from surgery. People who don't give in to their fear and worry do much better," he points out.

"In the hospital cardiology ward people can get very emotional, especially after surgery. That's because there is a clear relationship between the heart and the brain. You need to learn how to use your brain to calm your heart—whether or not you have undergone surgery," Dr. Murphy says.

Dr. Murphy is a strong advocate for a healthy diet, complemented by exercise, to combat stress and depression. "Employ an anti-inflammatory diet: fruits, vegetables, blueberries, and so on. Fish, chicken, cod liver oil, fish oil. Whole grains. Eliminating red meat can have a profound effect. These healthy diets are easily available online, so there is no excuse today for not knowing. Learn to meditate and partner that with exercise. Your lab results are bound to improve and your stress will be reduced. Your genes don't have to be your destiny," he says.

The field of medical psychology became an avocation for Dr. Murphy after witnessing the suffering of his father, who was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis, which then led to Parkinson's disease. Watching his father's deterioration led him to study how much impact a person can have over chronic illness. "My father died young, and I made a vow to not let that happen to me. I learned how to heal myself."

As evidence that his approach works, Dr. Murphy cites the case of a recent patient who was facing the prospect of having both of her hips replaced at once.

"The patient was a middle-aged woman whose hips were deteriorating, and was very worried about replacing both at the same time. Doing them together would mean her recovery would be faster, but she was balking at that admittedly scary prospect," he says. "She was stressed, she lived alone, and was also concerned about the expense of the surgery."

At Dr. Murphy's urging, she joined a local "joint camp," part of a nationally recognized hip and knee replacement program that excels in helping patients

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Stress Reduction via Biofeedback

Peter Behel with *Sonoma Medicine* Staff

With the subject of stress so prevalent in the news these days, Santa Rosa specialist Peter Behel hopes that *Sonoma Medicine* readers recognize there are non-toxic ways of managing it.

"The stress-related conditions I'm accustomed to working with are reflexive at their point of origin, and these long-term response patterns emerge from the lower brain centers in the brain stem. When targeted advantageously, biofeedback can be used to reorganize outdated and injurious response patterns," he says.

Mr. Behel has practiced in various clinical settings and hospital-based programs for the past 30 years, and also sees individuals at his office in Santa Rosa. He is a longtime member of multidisciplinary coordinated-care programs across the North Bay, and sees referrals from UCSF's pain program, Lucille Packard Stanford Children's Hospital, Kaiser Permanente, and other Bay Area treatment facilities and physicians. He is past president of the Biofeedback Society of California and, apart from stress, has applied biofeedback to conditions ranging from repetitive strain injuries (RSI), tendonitis, and chronic inflammation, to arthritis, asthma, and dystonia, a movement disorder in which a person's muscles contract uncontrollably.

Mr. Behel is a biofeedback specialist based in Santa Rosa. He has practiced in various clinical settings and hospital-based programs for the past 30 years.

Applied psychophysiology, more commonly referred to as biofeedback, is defined as "a patient-guided treatment that teaches an individual how to control muscle tension, pain, peripheral circulation, and other bodily functions and processes through targeted relaxation and cognitive control. The term 'biofeedback' refers to the biological signals that are monitored, fed back, and displayed to the patient in order for the patient to develop the ability to regulate them," Mr. Behel points out.

> "Sufferers have the power to influence the output of their own nervous system."

The technique employs the placement of sensors on the body. The sensors measure bodily functions such as heart rate, blood pressure, muscle tension (EMG or electromyographic feedback), respiration, and skin surface temperature (thermal feedback), and translate the information into a visual and/or audible readout, such as a paper tracing, a light display, or a series of "beeps."

"There is a range of complexity as far as the manner in which biofeedback can be applied. Not every practitioner who utilizes biofeedback does so with clinical neurophysiology in mind. Sometimes biofeedback is used to facilitate generalized relaxation. Because of the various personal and environmental stressors that periodically emerge, individuals can also receive benefit from using biofeedback to facilitate episodic relief," Mr. Behel says.

Stress and Migraines

Mr. Behel adheres to the practice that a phenomenon in the brain known as cortical spreading depression (CSD) is associated with the underlying cause of migraine pain. Studies have shown that the CSD phenomenon can be initiated when the normal flow of electric current around brain cell membranes is depolarized. If many cells are affected at the same time, this reversal can spread outward, leaving depleted cells behind, resulting in a migraine headache.

"Cortical spreading depression is associated with ischemia, and coincides with tissue hypoxia, impaired oxygen delivery and severe vasoconstriction by inverse neurovascular coupling under pathological conditions. This patterned response can be viewed as an expression of stress that involves the narrowing of the blood vessels as a result of smooth muscle contraction. When I train sufferers to regulate peripheral circulation, it can help unwind the migraine triggers," Mr. Behel says.

"You see a similar neurochemical cascading effect in play in conditions involving chronic inflammation and chronic pain. With chronic pain, cycling neuropeptides such as substance P, CGRP and glutamate can trigger a response constellation that leads to hyperalgesia, central sensitization, and wind-up pain. These same inflammatory mediators stimulate mast cell degranulation, drive leukocyte chemotaxis, and release cytokines and eicosanoids such as prostaglandins and leukotrienes in chronic inflammation. Accounting for the role that neurogenic inflammation plays in potentiating classic inflammation

following traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) is expanding our appreciation of the various facets that a stress response actually encompass, to the degree that the neuroinflammatory response is becoming recognized as a key secondary injury factor that can drive ongoing neuronal injury," Mr. Behel points out.

"Similarly, we are learning that inflammation is associated with many neurodegenerative conditions, including Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, ALS, Huntington's disease, and multiple sclerosis. Moreover, inflammation is recognized as being involved in psychiatric disorders such as depression, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia, as well as mental health conditions such as generalized anxiety disorder (GAD). To that extent, heart rate variability biofeedback is now being used as a determining factor to distinguish major depression from bipolar disorder. You have to wonder whether this marks the beginning of new trend in assessing and addressing stress-related health disorders," Mr. Behel says.

When he is not seeing patients, Mr. Behel teaches a course at Sonoma State University titled "Biofeedback, Stress Management, and Somatic Psychology," and this fall he is also launching a three-hour course on chronic pain through Community Education at Santa Rosa Junior College. He has authored and co-authored several papers on the successful application of biofeedback, including one with Dr. Allan Bernstein, who serves as chairman of *Sonoma Medicine*'s editorial board.

To those suffering from chronic or acute stress, professor Behel's closing message provides hope. "Sufferers have the power to influence the output of their own nervous system. Stress is associated with many health-related concerns. By strategically utilizing a step-by-step, non-toxic process called biofeedback, individuals have the ability to decrease their stress levels, reduce chronic inflammation, and vastly improve their lives and health for the better," he says.

Email: peterbehel@earthlink.net

Murphy, continued from p. 7

return to their lives as quickly as possible. She came around to the idea of doing both hips at the same time to facilitate a faster recovery. "We worked together so that she could successfully employ guided imagery to envision a positive outcome. She overcame her shyness to seek out friends and associates to act as a support network. In the end, the surgeries were successful, and she is happy and healthy, and frequently attending local dance events." Dr. Murphy has many such patient success stories.

A vast majority of physicians both understand and support this approach. "I have many good physician partners throughout the region. The main culprits for the patient are not medical in nature. Instead they are fear and expediency. On the one hand, we are introducing them to something new and unfamiliar. And on the other hand, our society has grown used to the 'quick fix,' with many patients asking, 'Why can't I just take a pill instead?'" he notes.

Dr. Murphy emphasizes that, "patients have the capacity, on their own, to help their own medical conditions. We need to trust the 'wisdom of the body.' Many studies have demonstrated that the patient who actively participates in his or her own care does better. There is a reason my business card displays the mind/body symbol. There is an ancient proverb, 'the body heals with play; the mind heals with laughter; and the spirit heals with joy.' We have the ability to heal ourselves. We need to get back to that."

"When you feel powerless over your life, depression will result. But when a depressed person takes control, and has success, they improve. The history of medicine is filled with the teachings of philosophy and how the mind and body interact. Influence your mind and your body will respond. Change your thinking and you will permanently alter your life for the better," he says.

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Managing Weight in Times of Stress

Gail Altschuler, MD

There are a multitude of factors affecting our weight. Stress is a significant one and undoubtedly, these are stressful times. Dr. Gail Altschuler is a bariatric specialist with over 15 years' experience. And for her it's personal: she likes to say, "I am the first patient." Years ago she lost 50 pounds and keeps it off by following the same approaches she now employs in her practice, Marin Weight Loss & Wellness.

How does stress impact weight gain?

Many people have experienced heightened stress this year. The fires have affected our patients, and also our colleagues, friends, and many providers and staff might have lost homes or had their lives disrupted. Even as hope replaces despair and we start to rebuild, the more recent fires have likely rekindled some of that stress. This compounds the normal stress that many people experience on a regular basis.

Patients come to my practice suffering significant weight gain resulting from both acute and chronic stress. Many of my patients experience chronic stress. Losing one's home, either from the recent fires or through financial difficulty, is an example of chronic stress. Taking care of an elderly parent falls into this category also, as does suffering job burnout or loss.

When patients come in complaining of weight gain, it's important to consider the impact that stress may be contributing. Stress releases cortisol, and cortisol is a storage hormone. Your body is literally preparing for an assault, and this is a setup for weight gain.

Dr. Altschuler is a diplomate of the Obesity Medicine Association and serves as medical director for Marin Weight Loss & Wellness.

Keep in mind that many of the medicines given to treat anxiety and depression cause weight gain as a side effect. Adjusting or avoiding these can help correct the problem.

This may all be compounded by the tendency to use alcohol and sweets, or overeating in general, which for many, may be the preferred choices for stress management. These choices instead cause weight gain and can even increase stress. A large part of this challenge is that overeating is a learned pattern. Often patients will have found early on that after a bad day or experience, drinking a glass of wine or eating certain foods offers comfort and escape.

So while others are developing a variety of skills to manage the normal ups and downs of life, these people continue to rely on limited strategies. It seems to work so well . . . until it doesn't. Guiding a patient to expand their skills is a must. It takes practice, but over time people learn a wider variety of skills to manage their stress, for example, by taking a walk or a bath, calling a friend, or listening to music.

Isn't weight loss only about diet and exercise?

As physicians our job is to begin conversations. Where and how these begin depends on the signals our patients give us. The more we understand about stress and weight gain, the more likely we will be able to guide our patients.

Consider that there are five components to a healthy lifestyle, and all contribute to managing weight, especially during stressful times. They are: diet, physical activity, relaxation, sleep, and social interactions.

It's natural to start with a healthy eating plan. In our program, we customize a plan for each individual's preferences, lifestyle, and goals. People work with a nutritionist weekly to integrate these skills into their daily life. That being said, it is a huge help for people who are overwhelmed to start with a simple meal plan. The Mediterranean diet is healthful, tasty, and easy to implement. Make the majority of meals whole food and plant-based, with vegetables and lean protein at the center. Avoid processed foods, sugar, and refined starches as much as possible.

It's well known that physical activity goes hand-in-hand with stress reduction. But for people experiencing significant stress, more is not always better. Taking a walk, or a yoga or dance class, can be just as healing. The trick is to find things that fit into an already busy routine. Getting up and moving at intervals throughout the day can be as helpful as intense exercise in the morning followed by sedentary activity. The best plans are things we will actually do.

Managing stress is getting more and more attention as a contributor to maintaining a healthy weight. The important thing is to find the tools that work for each individual. Meditation and yoga have become a popular place to start. The simple pleasures like reading a book, talking with a friend, or working in the garden are time-tested. Just taking some time for oneself each day can help a lot.

For most people, getting seven to eight hours of sleep a night is key. Maintaining a healthy rhythm allows our hormones to stay in balance and we are much less likely to overeat when we are rested. With so much to do, getting by on less sleep might

feel justified, or even required. But, it's a downward spiral. Being rested builds the resources to deal with challenging times.

Recent studies have shown that lack of intimacy may be a greater health risk than smoking 15 cigarettes a day. No matter how busy we are, taking the time to enjoy time with friends and family goes a long way towards maintaining balance, thus making it easier to manage our weight. Connecting people whose lives have been disrupted with local support can make a difference, too. It's a good idea to keep a list for referrals to local support groups.

Remind your patients that weight loss is not only about having more willpower. It is just as important to create an environment at home that increases the odds of success. Fill the home with tasty, healthy foods and remove those that are most tempting. Ask for support from friends and family who are often glad to help. And as much as possible, create a safe and healthy work environment.

How do you help people who are under chronic stress avoid weight gain?

First and foremost, I listen. We encourage people to share their stories in a safe environment. Just knowing that someone understands and cares can break a downward cycle. We start with a comprehensive evaluation to make sure there are no medical conditions or medications that are contributing.

> "Managing stress is getting more and more attention as a contributor to maintaining a healthy weight. "

Our programs are customized to each individual, as opposed to the "quick fixes" popularized through the mass media. What we do is give patients specific ways to nourish themselves so that they can thrive. For lasting weight loss, each person works with our team to rebuild skills for healthy eating, mindfulness, appropriate physical activity, personal growth, and healing.

Even though we are able to fine-tune to this degree, most people will improve with your simple attention. First, ask if they would like to discuss their weight. "I notice that your weight is creeping up and I'm concerned that it may be impacting your health," is a great place to start.

Follow-up makes the biggest difference. An appointment with you in a few weeks or even a call from the nurse to see how they are doing and offer suggestions, keeps things moving in the right direction. It takes time to change behaviors and discover new ways of coping that work.

Heads-up for the holidays

As of this writing in September, Halloween candy is already on the shelf. By the time this issue reaches you, the season will be in full swing, including the stress that goes with celebrations, family, temptations, and possibly, loss.

As we prepare for the holidays, it's good to remind your patients of the value of having a plan. I assure you, the food industry has a plan. The people who make sweets, who distribute alcohol and promote all the "fixins' " for your holiday meals, have been getting ready all year. So it's good to remember that "Big Food" is doing its job (eat more, buy more), just as it is your patients' responsibility to care for themselves and their family's health.

The average person gains between five and eight pounds between Halloween and the beginning of January. Most people retain two to three pounds of that increase in each successive year. Putting a few of the above strategies in place beforehand will keep one's weight steady. Eating well most of the time leaves plenty of room to splurge a bit for special occasions or meals.

The added stress of the holidays may be all it takes to put your patients on a path of unexpected weight gain, so a little attention to the details will go a long way towards helping them stay healthy. Staying active, getting enough rest and sleep, and spending time with loved ones will assist greatly in avoiding added stress and added weight.

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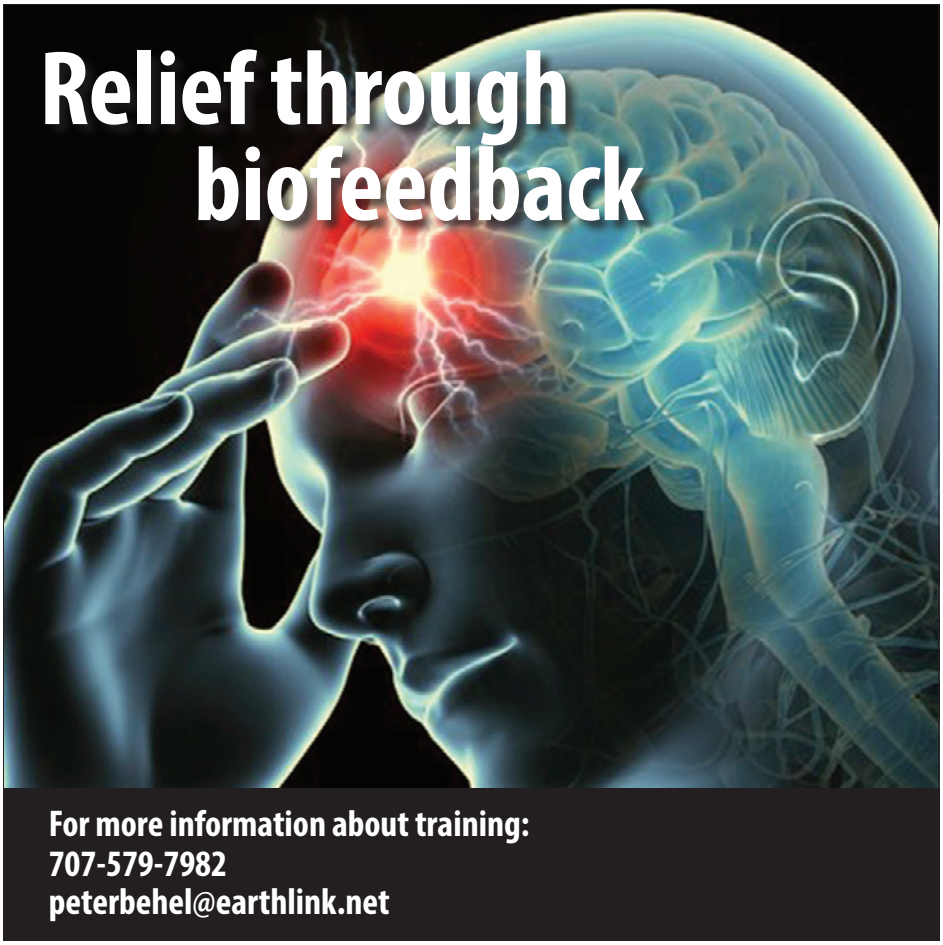

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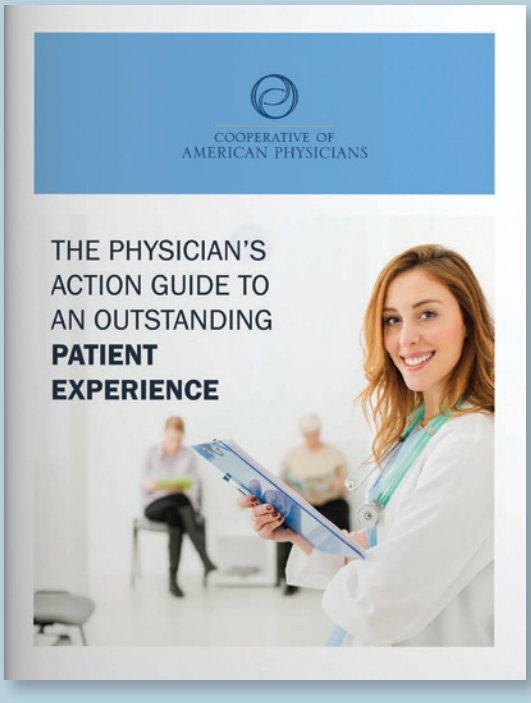

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Santa Rosa Community Health's Battle Against Opioids

Lisa Ward, MD, MsPH, MS, with *Sonoma Medicine* Staff

> "We have reduced the number of patients who use opioids to treat their pain in half, and we are putting in a ton of effort to teach providers new ways of treatment."

Dr. Lisa Ward told *Sonoma Medicine* recently that the origins of the current nationwide prescription opioid epidemic can be traced in part to the early 2000s, or even earlier. By then, instead of using opioid medications rarely, clinical policy shifted and physicians were taught to treat pain with opioids for a larger number of diagnoses like back pain and joint pain.

In turn, established standards for pain assessment were developed in response to a national outcry from patient advocacy groups and others over what was then termed, "the undertreatment of pain." The standards were developed by many organizations, including the Joint Commission, an independent, nonprofit organization that accredits and certifies over 20,000 healthcare organizations nationwide. At the same time, organizations and individual physicians were compelled to use pain as "the fifth vital sign" during routine care. And information promoting these medications from the pharmaceutical industry was widespread. Yet, a true representation of their risks and benefits was either unknown or obfuscated.

Dr. Ward serves as chief medical officer for Santa Rosa Community Health.

Opioid prescriptions went up dramatically after that, and accidental overdoses proceeded to rise as a result. Deaths occurred among users who misused opioids, but "also among patients faithfully taking opioids as prescribed, not overusing the drugs. Overdose deaths skyrocketed," Dr. Ward says.

For years, opioids have been regularly prescribed not only for chronic pain patients, but also by a wide range of providers addressing common health issues. Primary care providers use these medications for many types of musculoskeletal pain. Surgeons use them for post-operative pain. Dentists and oral surgeons will often prescribe them for pain. Emergency-room physicians have commonly prescribed opioids for acute conditions, from migraines to ankle sprains. In other words, opioid treatment is common. The National Institute on Drug Abuse reports that in 2017, there were nearly 20,000 deaths involving prescription opioid pain relievers, excluding non-methadone synthetics.

Community Health Responds

Beginning last year, Sonoma County's Department of Health Services partnered with local primary care providers and area hospitals in a coordinated effort to reduce opioid overdoses. Eleven local community health clinics are partners in the effort, as well as Kaiser Permanente, Sutter, and St. Joseph Health System.

"Our role now is to redefine for providers what prescription drug practices to follow. We are training and delivering a new skill set to our providers. These are things we didn't learn in our medical training. Many experienced physicians received an excellent medical education, but we were trained from the vantage point of using opioids more aggressively. We may not have been taught how to taper a patient from opioids, how to recognize overuse. And we did not routinely use tools like urine drug screens and prescription drug database information for confirmation of appropriate use by patients. Now we can offer physicians a new skill set in support of this initiative," Dr. Ward says.

Dr. Ward and Dr. Karen Milman,

the County Health Officer at that time, co-chaired a work group to develop countywide guidance on safe opioid prescribing. This group was supported by the Committee for Healthcare Improvement and Health Action, a larger cross-sector group working to improve the health of all residents of Sonoma County. Dr. Ward and her partners on this team developed safe prescribing guidelines so that efforts to use opioids safely are applied consistently across the county. "This includes deliverables: new and safer prescribing guidelines have been circulated countywide, and we were very gratified that every organization involved endorsed them. There are guidelines for ER docs and there are also primary care guidelines. Kaiser, Memorial, Sutter, Petaluma West—all of these hospitals have endorsed the ER guidelines. Sutter Health and Kaiser Permanente have even implemented special signage to reinforce these instructions," Dr. Ward notes.

Beyond new guidelines, Dr. Ward reports that the initiative also created a provider "toolkit" that is now widely available across the North Bay. The toolkit is also available via the Sonoma County Department of Health Services website, and includes helpful links, step-by-step guides for screenings, and sample letters explaining the new opioid guidelines to patients.

"Our guidelines—one set for emergency departments and one for primary care providers—provide strategies for safe prescribing practices, including patient screenings, monitoring and reassessment throughout course of care, treatment agreements, and tools for identifying patients with substance-use disorders. The new awareness has also spread to police and fire departments, which are now armed with Naloxone to block the effects of opioids when officers and firefighters encounter overdose situations," Dr. Ward observes.

Dr. Ward emphasizes that there are measurements in place to monitor the success of the program. "We are putting quality metrics in place. We instituted the practice guidelines throughout all the clinics in our network. We are training staff to interpret drug screening results to identify patients misusing medication. We are using data to identify problematic practices and correct them. We measure how many prescription drug database queries, or CURES, reports are reviewed prior to a prescription being written; we are teaching providers how to taper patients to lower, safe doses of opioid medication; and more. With these efforts, we have reduced the number of patients who use opioids to treat their pain in half, and we are putting in a ton of effort to teach providers new ways of treatment." Dr. Ward and her partners also hold clinics to help guide pregnant women in tapering off of their opioid dependence.

Dr. Ward spends about 30 percent of her clinical time on patients in chronic pain. Some people are quite open to new, more effective and safe ways to treat their pain. Others are less so. For some, the anticipation of moving away from opioid treatment to other methods of pain treatment can be frightening, even when these may be safer and more effective modalities in the long run.

"It can be terrifying to think you have to face a life of pain without pills, when you identify the pills as the very thing that has kept the pain at bay. In addition, the anticipation of withdrawal can be even more frightening. Nonetheless, the benefit of supporting patients through these transitions is so worth the effort. We need to provide access to safer medical interventions from our pain medicine colleagues. Sometimes a patient benefits from surgery, and our specialty colleagues help treat the root cause of pain. In addition, we also need to shepherd patients living with chronic pain to alternative therapies to help in this effort: acupuncture, chiropractic, physical therapy, exercise, and other ways of treating the depression associated with pain," she says.

"For the next few years and into the future, this will be a major patient initiative on our healthcare landscape. It will challenge our systems to meet patient needs. In support of patients, there is an unrelenting demand for mental health to confront some of the trauma and depression associated with chronic pain; and for some patients, substance use disorder treatment, or treatment for 'addiction,' is needed. Unfortunately, addiction treatment services are badly needed here in Sonoma County and nationwide. We also need more psychologists, physical therapists, and psychiatrists participating in this effort. There is not the workforce currently to meet patients' needs for these services. And we will continue to see the need for training for primary care clinicians in Medication Assisted Therapy to treat substance use disorder, tapering skills, and the clinical skills to manage the complexity of chronic pain. For the clear majority of patients, treatment options other than opioids are the appropriate remedy. Interventions are needed for quality of life that are not pharmaceutical in nature: exercise, mental health, and mindfulness skills training. And these offer no quick remedy," Dr. Ward notes.

"Often, we hear patients say, 'I didn't know opioids were unsafe.' Now we have an educational campaign for patients, along with tools for providers and physician offices to deploy. This, combined with our Sonoma County guidelines in primary care and emergency rooms that outline the best practices to provide safe and effective therapy for chronic pain, are true progress in the face of the opioid epidemic. There is a long way to go, but we are happy to spearhead a change in the culture of medical practice. There is a paradigm shift under way in the 'house of medicine' regarding opioids. We welcome it," Dr. Ward says in closing.

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Kaiser Permanente's First Family Medicine Residency Class Prepares to Serve North Bay

Patricia Hiserote, DO, with *Sonoma Medicine* Staff

When Dr. Patricia Hiserote sat down with *Sonoma Medicine* recently, her assessment of one of this country's greatest healthcare challenges was both sobering and inspiring.

"Medical students leave school with a debt of up to $300,000, and that can often affect their chosen career path. More and more, they have tended to go into more lucrative specialties like cardiology or gastroenterology. Family Medicine is the primary care physician of the future because internal medicine-trained physicians are not going into outpatient medicine. Overall, less than 10 percent practice in the outpatient setting. We have known for more than 20 years that we would face a dire shortage of primary care physicians nationwide in this country. So we at Kaiser Permanente Santa Rosa are doing our part to combat that," she says.

In an answer to this primary-care challenge, Dr. Hiserote, program director for Kaiser Permanente's family medicine residency, began seeking solutions. The end result is that this year KP Santa Rosa admitted its first sponsored residency class, which will graduate in June 2021. Kaiser Permanente funds the program and pays the salaries associated with it, aided by additional government funding acting in support.

Dr. Hiserote serves as program director for Kaiser Permanente's family medicine residency.

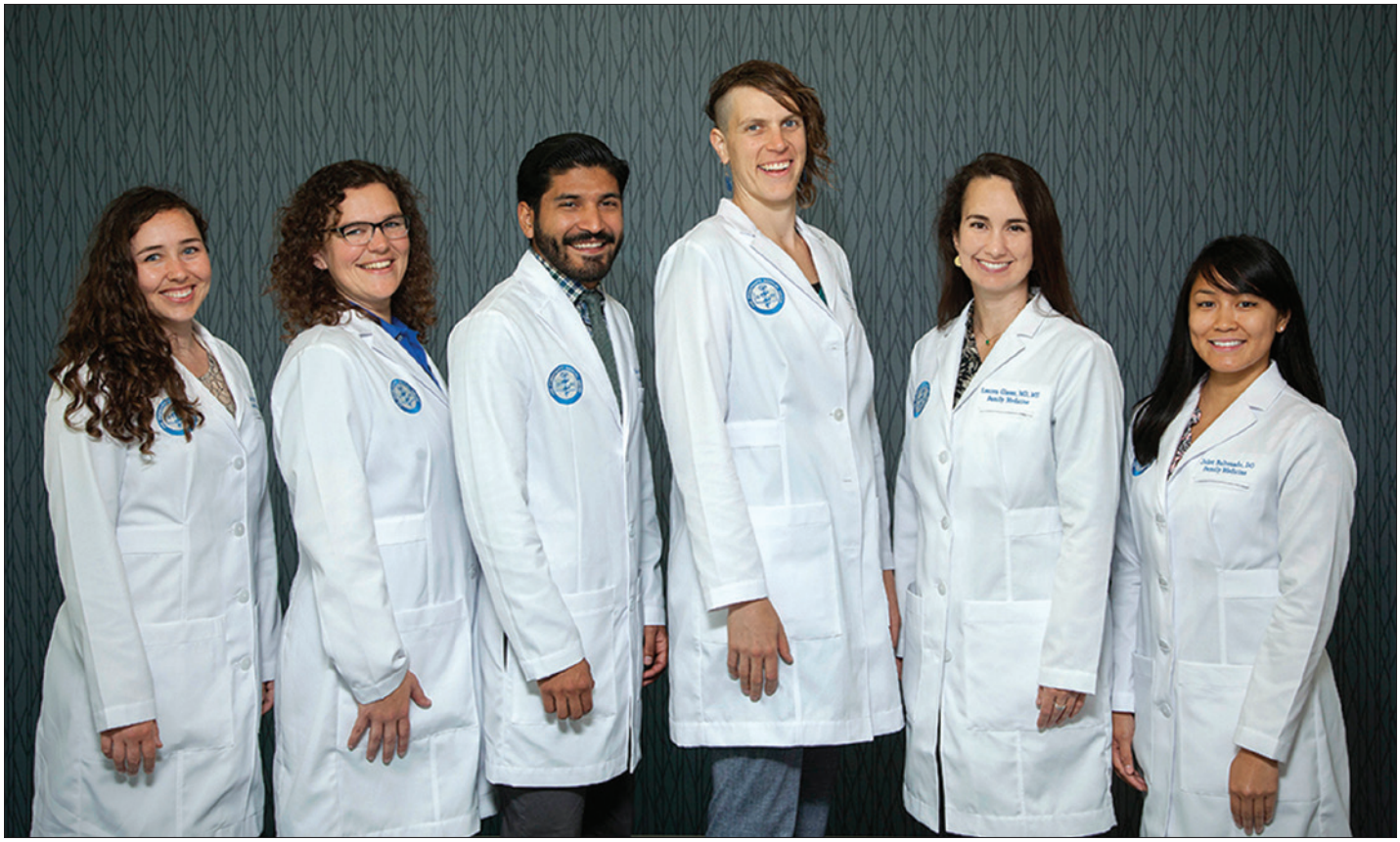
Background

Kaiser Permanente Santa Rosa started working with a consultant in 2010 to outline the various paths available to increase Sonoma County's population of primary care physicians. "The question at the beginning was: should we expand the existing Sutter-sponsored Family Medicine Residency, or start our own sponsored program? After considerable study and speaking with both organizations, the consultant concluded that Kaiser should have its own sponsored program. We have been, and will remain, an affiliate for the Sutter Santa Rosa Family Medicine Residency, and they are our partners in taking care of Sonoma County. The need for family medicine physicians is great, and having two programs in Santa Rosa is good for our community. We have been working to start our KP family medicine residency for some time, so seeing it launch in 2018 is very exciting," Dr. Hiserote told *Sonoma Medicine*.

The program received well over 100 applications for each of the six residency spots. "Kaiser Permanente's reputation as a UCSF-affiliate, and the favorable locale Sonoma County offers were considerable draws. But the Santa Rosa fires created a big problem for potential candidates. They were asking: was this a stable community and was the program itself stable? In the wake of the negative publicity caused by the fires, we asked ourselves: should we continue interviewing candidates for this program? In the end, the Kaiser Permanente Santa Rosa Command center said to go ahead with the interview process. We did our first two weeks of interviews at a hotel in San Francisco, because it was too dangerous to bring candidates to Santa Rosa. We prepared a virtual tour of our medical center so candidates could view it at the hotel. I am very proud of our team for preparing such an impressive introduction to our program that could be viewed remotely," she said.

The benefits that accrue to a local community cultivating its own physicians are enormous, Dr. Hiserote says. "Studies have shown that, on average, 60 percent of medical residents remain in the community in which they are trained. And 80 percent of doctors who both attend medical school and complete their residency in California, remain in California for their careers. Sonoma County will enjoy lasting benefits from this program," she remarked.

Family Medicine residency training is three years. In internship, or the first year



Kaiser Santa Rosa's first family residency class consists of (from left) physicians Elia Cole, DO, Tracy Krinard, DO, Daniel Ayala-Ortiz, MD, Alexis Hoffkling, MD, Lauren Glaser, MD, and Julet Baltonado, DO.

of training, residents spend the majority of their time in a hospital setting. However, they're always coming back to their clinic to take care of their patients. By the time these family medicine residents are in their third, and final, year of training, they are primarily focused in the outpatient setting, caring for their panel of patients.

"It is important that our residents are trained in both the KP and community setting. We are excited to be affiliated with Petaluma Health Center (PHC), a model of patient-centered care within the federally qualified health center system. Our residents will also see patients at PHC throughout all three years of their training. PHC was recently awarded an HRSA award for its programs focused on quality. It's exciting to see our residents learning from two wonderful organizations that provide quality care. When quality and access to care is made easier for our patients, we all benefit," Dr. Hiserote notes.

To assist in physician recruitment and training, Dr. Hiserote and her team employ the services of Kaiser Permanente Santa Rosa's patient advisory councils, which provide feedback on resident selection. "Our patients are helping to select the primary physicians of tomorrow. Our first class of residents also participated in a standardized patient exam, where they have the opportunity to watch the interaction afterwards and receive feedback from individuals trained to be patients."

"All KP physicians, including residents, receive Member Patient Satisfaction scores on how patients perceive their care. Little tweaks to physicians' behavior can make a big difference, with exponential results over the long term. For example, sometimes doctors are thinking about the patient's symptoms and typing this information into the computer; but the patient perceives this as being distracted, or not paying attention. Feedback from the standardized patients can highlight things like this and improve the physician's communication skills, which will positively impact every patient the young physician sees in his or her career." Dr. Hiserote's team even utilizes the services of Survey Monkey, a leading survey software company, to provide real-time feedback from patients so they may improve their performance.

Dr. Hiserote continues to be impressed by both the experience and qualifications this first class of residents bring with them. "Our veteran medical staff jokes that we wouldn't get into medical school, let alone this residency program, if we were entering the field today. These young physicians are so talented in so many ways. They appreciate that providing medical care in a compassionate and empathic way is critical, and so much of this requires excellent communication skills. I feel fortunate to work for an organization that values what we do and is focused on building physician leaders," she emphasizes.

Recruitment for Kaiser Permanente's next family medicine residency class is already under way. "Kaiser Permanente is part of a broader campaign to increase the number of primary care physicians nationwide. I am very fortunate to work with such a phenomenal team that has worked diligently to create a sustainable program that will provide Sonoma County, and the rest of the country, with family medicine leaders for years to come," Dr. Hiserote said in closing.

Email: patricia.x.hiserote@kp.org

Latino Health Forum Celebrates 26 Years

Enrique González-Mendez, MD, with *Sonoma Medicine* Staff

As the Latino Health Forum enters its twenty-sixth year of operation, Dr. Enrique González-Mendez is justifiably proud of the group's progress. "As we near our third decade, the forum has become instrumental in bringing this community closer together. We uniquely address Latino culture and the health issues that affect this part of our population," he says. The forum is organized by the Santa Rosa Family Medicine Residency in partnership with Sutter, St. Joseph Health, Kaiser Permanente, Santa Rosa Junior College, Sonoma State University, and the Sonoma County Department of Health Services.

The annual event brings together over 300 attendees from health, human services, and education, as well as community leaders, scholars, political leaders, and students to address the unique healthcare needs of the area's Latino population.

"To best serve Latinos, it is important to understand their culture, access, and traditional health issues, as well as the social determinants of health. We know that a person's genetic code has an important impact on health. But a person's zip code can also provide clues to their particular health challenges," Dr. González says.

Dr. González-Mendez, a family medicine physician with Alexander Valley Healthcare, is chair of the Latino Health Forum Board.

"For example, Santa Rosa's Roseland neighborhood has less access to healthy foods, such as fruits and vegetables, than more affluent areas. There are more alcohol and tobacco stores than grocery stores in much of this area. The combined effects of these various social factors can lead to a lower life expectancy. Also, many Latinos work in low paying occupations and may have occupational exposures, such as pesticides, that can be a factor in poor health outcomes and reduced life expectancy," he points out.

The number of years of schooling is also a key social determinant of health, according to Dr. González. Put simply, the more schooling, the better the health outcomes. "A person who finishes school at a young age and then begins a life of manual labor can, in general, expect a lower life expectancy than one who attends college and then has a higher paying job," he says.

Dr. González highlights a dichotomy with the Latino immigrant population. "The diet of rural Mexicans is generally better than that of Latinos who have been in this country for an extended period. The reason? In rural Mexico, they tend to eat less, and they walk everywhere. Latinos who move to the United States actually experience poorer health over time: they have access to cars or public transportation, and they may opt for less healthy food choices than in their native Mexico," he notes.

"A person's social network is also very important to his or her health. A key question to ask is: if you were to have surgery, how many people could you call to help? American culture tends to be more isolated. In general, with smaller families, there are fewer people to call, and sometimes for cultural reasons a reluctance to make the call at all. By contrast, with Latinos, the extended family network can provide a more ample support system in times of need. And that contributes to greater longevity."

Dr. González points to further cultural differences between the United States and Mexico. "In American culture, the norm is that once children are grown, they move out of the home and often out of the area entirely. Parents are isolated and they die younger. Not so in Latino culture, where grandparents are key. The expectation is that grandparents will help raise their grandchildren when parents are at work. Thus seniors tend to live longer in Latino cultures. As a consequence, nursing homes are less common in Mexico than in the United States. And having grandparents watch grandchildren has the added benefit of eliminating the cost of daycare or a babysitter," he smiles.

The forum is a political force as much as it is one focused on health. "Forum leaders inform politicians and community leaders about the impact of policies that affect health, such as more parks in low-income neighborhoods and reducing the number of liquor stores in favor of

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healthier alternatives. We also are working with law enforcement to reduce gang activity. We have had keynote speakers from law enforcement, reinforcing the fact that keeping our communities safe will, by definition, allow people in these communities to live longer, healthier lives," Dr. Gonzáles says.

Dr. González emphasizes that outreach to young people is a primary focus. The forum invites attendees from Santa Rosa Junior College, Sonoma State University, and local high schools, who receive scholarships to attend. This enables a greater number of minority students to be exposed, often for the first time, to the idea of working in the medical or human services field. Hundreds of students attend, and thousands have attended over the years, he notes.

"At the forum, immigrant students are surrounded by professionals who talk to them about the medical field. It can be a real eye-opener for these students. This experience opens a window to a wider world beyond that of a low-income job being one's sole future. The medical professionals counseling these students become role models for them, enlarging the possibilities for a career path that is meaningful and fulfilling," he adds.

Speakers also come from both the state and national levels. Scholars attend, including last year a physician/speaker from Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. That doctor discussed the policies developing in Washington, D.C., and how political developments at the national level can affect the health field locally.

Dr. González told *Sonoma Medicine* that great progress has been made in providing care to underserved communities. But there is still more to do.

"Policies to provide better access and expanded community health centers are needed to serve greater numbers of people. Without them, more patients will end up visiting emergency rooms instead, which raises healthcare costs for everyone. And that is something all of us want to avoid," he notes.

The 2018 Latino Health Forum is scheduled for Nov. 1 at Sonoma State University. For more information, please visit latinohealthforum.org.

Email: gonzmad@aol.com

Thursday, November 1, 2018

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- To inform professionals about the most relevant challenges facing the Latino population and the community at large in Sonoma County
- To enhance access and quality of health services for Latinos and the community at large
- To inspire local students to pursue careers in health and social services
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"Urban Inferno" Documents Devastation, Heroism of 2017 Firestorm

Mette Hansen, MD, with *Sonoma Medicine* Staff

"Urban Inferno" poster.

When Dr. Mette Hansen and her husband, Dr. Stephen Seager, set out to make a film about the October 2017 Santa Rosa fires, it wasn't their first turn behind the camera.

They already had two prior films under their belt: "Shattered Families," which details the collapse of this country's mental-health system; and "Roadmap: Making a Mental Health System That Works," which provides a blueprint for a successful mental-health structure in the United States.

Dr. Hansen practices physical medicine and rehabilitation at Kaiser Permanente in Santa Rosa. Dr. Stephen Seager is a psychiatrist practicing in Contra Costa County.

Dr. Hansen was out of town during the fires, and it took her three days to return, only by changing her flight destination to the San Francisco International Airport. The Charles Schulz Sonoma County Airport remained closed to commercial traffic for days due to power outages and smoke-impaired visibility. Upon returning she and her husband decided on the spot to make a film about the disaster and the heroism that accompanied it. "Urban Inferno: The Night Santa Rosa Burned," had its premiere in Santa Rosa in July.

Dr. Hansen is board certified in physical medicine and rehabilitation, and practices in Santa Rosa.

"Storytelling comes naturally to physicians, because every day we are writing about or discussing our patients' stories. Natural disasters need documenting. We started filming a month after the flames were extinguished. Santa Rosa's landscape at that time called to mind old photographs of Hiroshima after the bomb was dropped. We wanted the story told from a local perspective. This was to be not a sanitized or glamorized Hollywood version, but a homegrown one," Dr. Hansen says.

It was a family affair and a team effort. The husband-wife team partnered with KSRO Radio General Manager Michael O'Shea and News Director Pat Kerrigan, who acted as co-producers on the film. The Seagers' son helped with production. The team obtained extensive footage from eyewitnesses who had posted material to YouTube; body-camera footage from local law enforcement and firefighters working to save lives; and video from out-of-state television stations that covered the story. They hired a professional cinematographer to film additional footage. The film includes interviews with Sonoma County Sheriff Robert Giordano and Santa Rosa Fire Chief Tony Gossner.

The Seagers edited the film on a Mac at their home, assisted by a professional editor who helped find online video footage. KSRO stepped in with a drone video detailing the devastation left in the fire's wake. Some footage came via the body camera of a Berkeley firefighter who fought the blaze in Coffey Park and witnessed the destruction of the former Kmart store bordering the 101 freeway.

"Urban Inferno" won "Best Documentary Film" at the recent Lo to No Film Festival in Las Vegas, Nev. The husband-wife team funded the $20,000 film out of their personal funds, and all proceeds from theatrical showings are being donated to the Sonoma County Resilience Fund, a project of the Community Foundation Sonoma County, which is addressing the community's mid- to long-term recovery needs.

"We set out to validate people's experiences. Ultimately this is a hopeful story.

Dr. Stephen Seager, co-creator of "Urban Inferno."

The community really stepped up to assist with this project. Santa Rosans wanted to participate, which was very heartening to us. We were initially concerned that our fellow citizens would not want to relive this experience. But just the opposite has happened. We have been told many times that the film is therapeutic for those in the audience," Dr. Hansen says.

"Thousands of lives were altered in October 2017. The positive aspect is that people have learned from this traumatic experience: how to save lives, how to get out of the way of a fire or a similar natural disaster, and how to take care of each other in a crisis. We feel humbled and honored to have played a part in recording this episode in Santa Rosa's history," she points out.

"Urban Inferno: The Night Santa Rosa Burned," recently closed out its theatrical run at the 3rd Street Cinemas in Santa Rosa, raising $27,000 in community funds. The film is for sale in Blu-Ray format at the front desk of radio station KSRO, 1410 Neotomas Avenue, Suite 200, in Santa Rosa.

Email: Mette.U.Hansen@kp.org

Santa Rosa post-fire devastation. Photo by Diane Askew.

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SONOMA VALLEY
Yong Liu, MD

SANTA ROSA
Tara Bartlett, DO
Chad Krilich, MD
Shawn Daly, MD (2020)
Robert Schulman, MD (2020)
Peter Sybert, MD (2019)

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Regina Sullivan, MD (2021)

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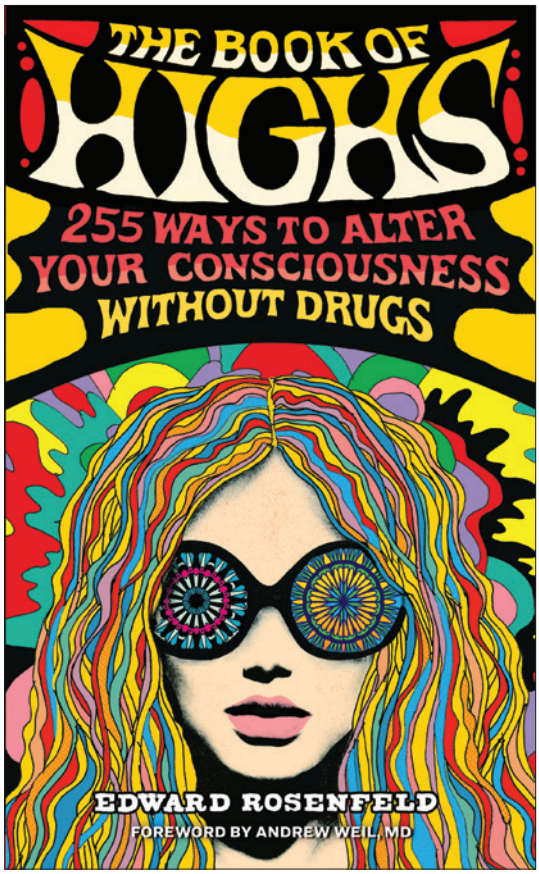
Savoring the Sublime: *The Book of Highs: 255 Ways to Alter Your Consciousness Without Drugs*

Brien A. Seeley, MD



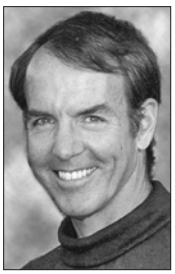
Nice, kinda fruity," I said.

"No, no, no," said the sommelier, "taste it again, further, deeply take it in, let it permeate all your senses and your imagination. Try to name all the flavors, scents, and textures."

I did. "Wow! Thank you. There is so much more going on here—so worth taking the time to savor. I need to slow down at these tastings."

This wine-tasting anecdote hints at the richness of discovery that awaits those who can fathom all of their senses. Just as it is for wine, there is always much more going on with patients than is apparent on the surface. If physicians uniformly applied the observational and deductive powers of the legendary Sherlock Holmes, medical care could be much more effective.

Nowhere is the "Sherlock mentality" more needed than in assessing a patient's stress level. Imagine stress to be a bitter, acidic, metallic-tasting wine. It is the enemy of health and wellness. Medical science has trouble quantifying stress, its adverse health effects, and effective remedies for them. Definitive research is lacking. To really discern a patient's stress level from his or her body language, verbal tone, personal hygiene, and attire, we must consistently apply the Sherlock mentality. Like the sommelier, the great UCSF Professor William F. Hoyt taught such mindfulness to med students and residents by emphatically telling them, "First, you've got to ask the right question!" Even beyond such deductive logic, physicians should employ synesthesia—using all our senses, like in wine tasting—to detect patients' stress levels.



Dr. Seeley is a Santa Rosa ophthalmologist and serves on the editorial board of Sonoma Medicine.

Some patients work themselves into a living hell of stress and then tenaciously resist professional help in getting out of it. Their unrelenting stress becomes an unhealthy existence that may in time contribute to them growing a tumor, abscess, ulcer, or aneurysm. We can prescribe anxiolytic pills to blunt the perception of stress, but the liberating removal of stress requires something more holistic and more sustained than temporary deception. Something inexpensive and without side effects would be nice.

Ideally, patients could regularly enact this holistic something by themselves or with their mate in order to achieve a sustained, pan-physiologic reduction in stress. But to succeed, such holistic self-help pursuits require levels of mental capacity and compliance that are simply lacking in many patients. Effectively focusing concentration enough to naturalistically alter one's state of consciousness, such as in biofeedback, requires time plus a sustained attention span and determined effort. Successful focusing of concentration is impeded by anxiolytic drugs, cannabis, and alcohol.

First published in 1973 during the heyday of psychedelic drugs, *The Book of Highs: 255 Ways to Alter Your Consciousness Without Drugs* is an historic compilation. Its original readership seemed aimed at the "turn-on, tune-in, and drop-out" hippie counterculture of the day. Forty-five years later, our more liberal and enlightened cultural acceptance of mind-altering pursuits in 2018 enables this classic book to be updated and republished by its original author, Edward Rosenfeld. His "comeback" edition follows on his more recent role as a writer on the subject of neural networks and artificial intelligence. He publishes a newsletter, *Intelligence,* and is a founding editor of *Omni* magazine. He states his purpose

of a lifelong interest in mind-altering phenomena in the preface to this 2018 edition with "Here's hoping this book will inform, delight, and serve many."

In order to usefully discuss this book, we should first ask what constitutes "being high," a question for which nobody has a definitive answer. According to this book, it would appear that being high is any altered state of consciousness (ASC). This means that ASCs encompass a wide spectrum of mental states, and not always good or expansive ones. For example, consider road rage, sleepwalking, drunkenness, and the like. Descriptions of ASCs by some experts can help.

In his foreword to *The Book of Highs,* integrative medicine expert Andrew Weil, MD, decries the inadequacies of drug-induced highs and extols the potential benefits of repeated, self-reliant, natural highs as a means to "integrate the conscious and unconscious spheres of our mental life . . . the key to wholeness (health) of body and mind." He describes meditation and most other methods of getting high as having the common trait of directed conscious concentration that stills "the restlessness of the ever-observing mind." He attributes being high as a natural state, "that core feeling of joyful transcendence that is the basic state of the human nervous system." One wonders whether such highs might be considered selfish and hedonistic, or merely entertaining withdrawals from responsibility.

Don Lattin of UC Berkeley,[1] author of *Changing Our Minds: Psychedelic Sacraments and the New Psychotherapy,* describes being high more as the psychedelic variant, calling it, "having a sense of oneness with the universe, with the earth, with nature, with other people—almost a melting together. That's a classic mystical experience. Some people can get that with a walk in the woods . . . . Just a sense of awe and wonder, a feeling of profound gratitude, compassion." This version sounds more like the essence of wellness rather than like a hedonistic retreat from reality.

Then there's Arthur Freed's description of the altered state of consciousness we know as being in love, as sung by Gene Kelly in "Singin' in the Rain":

I'm singin' in the rain, just singin' in the rain
What a glorious feeling I'm happy again
I'm laughing at clouds so dark above
The sun's in my heart and I'm ready for love
Let the stormy clouds chase everyone from the place
Come on with the rain, I've a smile on my face
I'll walk down the lane with a happy refrain
And singin', just singin' in the rain.

Every altered state of consciousness is surely actuated by physiologic processes, ostensibly making them fall within the purview of medical science. We would expect medical science to someday try to rank ASCs of different types according to the effectiveness of their stress-relieving or health-enhancing benefits. Society, clerics, and policymakers already rank them by their safety or their "wholesomeness." To physicians, studied and "reputable" methods of getting high with positive health benefits would seem worthy additions to the medical armamentarium. However, deconstructing the physiology of ASCs with the science of neurotransmitters and hormones need not diminish the nurturing beliefs in mysticism and feelings of liberation and higher purpose gained from highs of whatever type.

The prototype of approaching "oneness" of mind and body with the universe is orgasm, something that most adults have experienced, and some with regularity. Orgasm is often cited as being the ecstatic state that most closely embodies the transcendence felt by masters of meditation, mystics and shamans. PET scans[2] have shown that during orgasm, the brain regions associated with behavioral control, fear, and anxiety shut down. It would seem then that all methods used to induce a natural high would aspire to create a similarly profound physiologic event.

But many of the bizarre alternative methods presented in *The Book of Highs* are not profound or pan-physiologic. They are laughable. In fact, what makes this book so amusing is its inclusion of nearly every conceivable mind-altering strategy, no matter how ridiculous it may seem, without any requirement for rigorous, double-blind, controlled studies on their effectiveness, nor that they be defined by their physiologic effects. The book is filled with strategies that are not taught in medical schools.

The author describes each strategy succinctly, usually in one page or less, and then provides a "Further Resources" section for each, which offers links to other books, articles, videos, recordings, and other online material. For some strategies, he offers caveats that they could lead to nausea, disorientation, or death. The chapter on negative techniques of getting high through self-abuse is best ignored.

Though it includes some physical movement, posture, and play strategies to get high, some surprising omissions in the book are hugs,[3] walking in nature, walking hand-in-hand, and nap-taking. The body of medical research about oxytocin's beneficial role in easing stress is likewise largely overlooked.

Among the more interesting strategies presented in the book are:

- Self-hypnosis and trance
- Breathwork: deliberate controlled exalted breathing
- Gymnastics, postures, and yoga
- Sensory training (wine tasting is an example)
- Eastern religions
- Flash mobs
- Rock throwing

Movies and various types of virtual reality are described as mind-altering. It is conceivable that a stressed person, by simple exposure to the right kind of movies or VR experiences, could be relieved of their stress. Might there emerge a therapeutic channel at HBO, Netflix, or Amazon?

I recommend this book as a fun and mind-expanding way to get quickly educated about what alternatives stressed patients may be trying out beyond the prescriptions and therapies that we conventionally recommend.

Email: brien.seeley@gmail.com

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The Great Apple Stomp 2018

Anna Aaronson

Dr. Allan Bernstein feeds the apple press.

It was a dazzlingly sunny afternoon in Graton on Sunday, Aug. 12, for the twenty-second annual "Great Apple Stomp," hosted by Drs. Allan and Laura Bernstein.

As I arrived at the Bernstein residence around 12:30 p.m., the festivities were unfolding in the spacious backyard, a sprawling lawn skirted by orchards and varied flora.

I spoke with Mary Anne Westerfield, a veteran Stomp attendee; she has made the annual trek from San Rafael to Graton for eight years. She ushered me toward the orchards, tucked away adjacent to the yard. I filled my blue plastic bucket with Gravensteins.

"Gravensteins are not commercially popular," Dr. Catherine Foster, another apple enthusiast, remarked as Mary Anne and I re-joined the party. "But they're great for juice and apple sauce."

Foster shares Dr. Bernstein's passion for produce: "My kids never got a meal without apples," she said brightly.

After apple picking in the blistering sun, I was ready for a spell in the shade. I sat down with Dr.

Dr. Bernstein, host of the event, entertains guests while feeding Gravenstein apples into the apple press.

Anna Aaronson works at North Bay Neuroscience in Sebastopol.

Dick Kirk of Glen Ellen, a psychiatrist, as he reclined in a wooden lawn chair.

Dr. Kirk, who has been attending the Stomp for around six to eight years, met Dr. Bernstein through their mutual membership in the California Rare Food Growers' Association. Dr. Kirk grows "hundreds of types of apples, plums, stone fruits, apricots, pluots . . . all the hybrids."

The conversation took a contemplative turn, from fruit, to phenomenology, to self- and community empowerment.

"Curiosity is the antidote for criticism. That's my mantra," Dr. Kirk told me, cradling containers of freshly pressed juice in his arms.

Physicians, artists, chefs—only Stomp attendees themselves were more eclectic and colorful than the host of vegetation on the Bernstein premises.

From how to properly poach a fish, to the chemical ramifications of fat saturation, food connoisseur and chemist/chef Roger Gaffner regaled partygoers with facts as we chowed down on homemade blackberry pie.

"Use vodka to make a flaky pie crust," chef Roger advised, as I tore through my pastry.

Then it was my turn to have a go at the apple press, so I walked to join the crop of children chucking apples into the massive wooden contraption. I watched as the Gravensteins were pulverized: big, green orbs transformed into a nondescript mush. I turned the press, watching with satisfaction as the mush gave way to a river of amber juice. And it was some of the tastiest juice I've ever had.

From apple sauce, to chutney, to prime rib, the juice gleaned from the day's event plays a role in many culinary delights and traditions. The apple's greatest delight, however, is the ritualized union of individuals from all corners of the North Bay and beyond, in the glorious heat of an August day.

Email: anna.aaronson@gmail.com

Dr. Bernstein's annual Apple Stomp yields a bumper crop of Gravensteins for the enjoyment of friends, neighbors, family, and out-of-town visitors.

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2017 scholarship recipients

PHOTO BY KATHERINE KOH

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For more information on the HCS program, please call SCMA at **707-525-4375** or visit the medical association's website at **www.scma.org**. (You must donate via MSSC/SCMA as noted above by Dec. 1, 2018, for your donation to qualify for matching funds.)

Donations to the Medical Society of Sonoma County are fully tax-deductible. MSSC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, Tax ID Number 82-1456994.

SUMMER ESSAY CONTEST WINNER

Brace Yourself for the Brace

Siya A. Shah

On one anxious day, after my cousin had come home in July, she had received a WCR back brace. Since this information is confidential, my cousin's "name," which will be used to describe her events, will be Mira. Mira received a brace due to having scoliosis, which is an abnormal curvature of the spine. Braces provide support for your back, teeth, and even your neck. The most common, however, is (with no surprise) dental braces. Though there are many varieties of braces, they all play a similar role, keeping yourself straight. A back brace keeps your back aligned, while dental braces keep your teeth straight. With her luck, she received the back brace, a curved, thermoplastic support, which played the role of preventing further harm and, in the worst case scenario, surgery. Other intentions include preventing back pain and appearing crooked. However, with all the pros, there are always cons.

Despite the benefits, Mira soon realized that it was hard to get used to. Wearing the brace came with itching, eating problems, discomfort (at times), and the need to wear it outside the house. With no surprise, it wouldn't take long to realize the truth. She knew she'd soon have to deal with school and revealing her brace. A simple hug or a bump could easily show that something about you was different. That's why it is important to be careful, especially during school.

Mira developed scoliosis when she was around six. She didn't have many feelings about this new aspect of her life, due to her being young and naive. Now, however, I asked her about how she felt when getting a brace, and she responded very positively. When Mira found out one day in Stanford, that she was getting a brace, a mixture of sadness, curiosity, and, surprise swept onto her. Surprise, because she never thought she would get a brace, despite her scoliosis. Curiosity, because she didn't know what it would feel like. Last, but not least, sadness, because at that moment she realized her life would never be the same.

Here's a positive note for my cousin. Hopefully, Mira feels a lot better now, despite finding out about dealing with wearing a brace. Mira told me that eventually, she believed she would get used to it. Thankfully, I will never have to wear one, because I know it would be harder for me if I ever did. All I can say to her is "be strong, Mira, and good luck!"

Thankfully, a brace is something you wear for only a few years of your life. However, it can make a big impact on your lifestyle. I felt inspired when I found out that Mira wore a brace in late July. Mira's brace inspired me to want to help others and work towards becoming a health professional when I am older. I knew Mira's life would not be easy from then on, so I believe I should help others prevent scoliosis in the first place. Wearing a brace comes with pros, such as preventing further pain, and cons, such as discomfort. At first, my cousin felt sadness and surprise, but now, I believe Mira feels a lot more comfortable. After all, a brace doesn't change who you are inside, such as your personality and emotions. What a brace truly does change, though, is your physical appearance, your cognizance, and your way of life.

For winning the Sonoma Medicine *Essay Content (assignment: to write about an "Aha!" moment), 12-year-old Siya Shah will receive $150 and an invitation to the SCMA Awards Gala in December. Siya attends Rincon Valley Middle school and is the daughter of Drs. Anish and Paulomi Shah.*

Watch for information about next year's contest in the spring 2019 issue of Sonoma Medicine *magazine.*

MEDICAL ARTS

The PHOTOGRAPHY of DR. MISTY ZELK

Photography has always been a passion for me. It started with classes in junior high, and I never stopped. I'm drawn to the challenge of doing wildlife. It doesn't take patience when you are so fascinated by the animals that you just enjoy watching them.

The 2016 Yellowstone trip was an "old-school" adventure complete with tent camping. My youngest daughter was approaching high school, and I wanted to get in one big road trip before school started.

Since I engage in a profession that is largely cerebral, I love doing something with my hands where the end result can be seen. My goal is to shoot well enough that I don't need Photoshop. I also hang several pictures in my exam rooms. They are frequently a conversation starter for new patients, and many have said the photos put them at ease.

Email: mzelk@yahoo.com

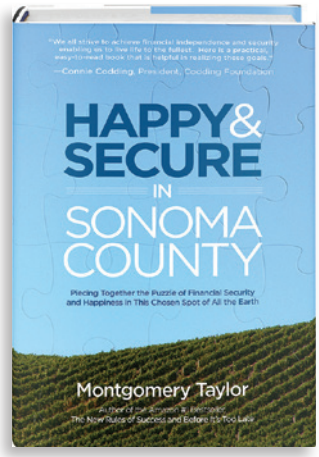
Dr. Zelk is board certified in internal medicine and pediatrics. She practices in Healdsburg.

Clockwise from upper left: The View at Inspiration Point; Lower Falls Cascades Down; Exelsior Runoff. Below: Grand Prismatic Pool with Reflections.

Clockwise from upper left: Morning Glory Pool; Elk in Profile; Old Faithful Blows; Bear on the Run; Big Daddy Bison.

Says Dr. Zelk: "Watching that black bear cover a mile and eat a buffalo it had felted the day before was a once-in-a-lifetime experience."

See more of Dr. Zelk's travel photos, including the entire Yellowstone gallery, at https://photographybymz.shutterfly.com/pictures.



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SCMA and CMA Launch Branding Change

Have you noticed our new look? The Sonoma County Medical Association has a new set of logos and a seal, designed to re-energize our branding and communications. There are two logo versions, with color variations of purple and navy blue. The new colors were selected by SCMA's board of directors and will be displayed in various ways, depending on context and formatting requirements.

SCMA's new logo is part of the California Medical Association's initiative to demonstrate a cohesive and consistent brand across all communication channels, affiliates and platforms. CMA's family includes 37 county medical societies, a political action committee, a foundation and other partners throughout California.

As part of the redesign, CMA also launched the next generation of its website with powerful recruitment and engagement tools to keep SCMA/CMA members at the forefront of an ever-changing healthcare landscape. Highlights of the new site include a simplified CMA/county login process; the ability to choose preferences for custom content and alerts; mobile-responsive design; a Grassroots Action Center for tracing CMA's advocacy efforts; discussion forums; legislative tracker; newsroom and much, much more. Visit www.cmadocs.org.

To renew your membership or join SCMA/CMA, go to www.cmadocs.org/join.
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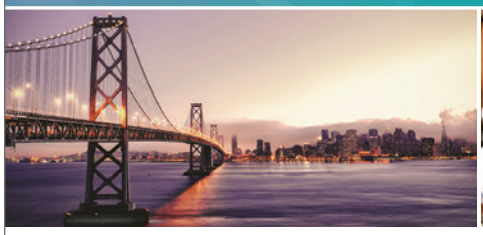

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OPEN CLINICAL TRIALS IN SONOMA COUNTY

Sonoma Medicine lists open clinical trials in Sonoma County to increase awareness of local medical research and to benefit physicians who may wish to refer patients. This list includes research groups that both responded to our request for information and are conducting open trials. The clinical trials at other research groups are only open to their own patients.

Each listing includes the group's name and address, along with the phone number and email address of the appropriate contact person. As the list is subject to change, contact the individual research groups for the latest information.

If you know of other local open trials, contact SCMA at 707-525-4375 so the information can be listed in the next issue. This section is provided as a free service by *Sonoma Medicine*, and we rely upon voluntary input from the medical community in order to provide it. ■

NORTH BAY NEUROSCIENCE

7064 Corline Ct., Suite B-1, Sebastopol
Contact: Anna Aaronson
707-827-3593, Fax 707-861-9465
anna.aaronson@northbayneuro.org

Novartis Generation 1 Study, CAP015A2201J

- This randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled study evaluates the efficacy of two investigational drugs, CAD106 and CNP520, in comparison to respective placebo in participants at high risk of developing dementia based upon their age and genetic status. Cognitively unimpaired individuals age 60 to 75 years, inclusive, with APOE4 homozygote (HM) genotype are selected, as they represent a population at particularly high risk of progression to dementia due to Alzheimer's disease. Treatment will occur for at least 60 months, and up to 96. Approximately 1,340 participants will be randomized across at least 80 study sites across the world.

Novartis Generation 2 Study, CNP520A2202J

- A randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled study to evaluate the efficacy and safety of CNP520, an investigational drug, in comparison to placebo in participants at risk for the onset of clinical symptoms of Alzheimer's disease. The study analyzes the effects of CNP520 on cognition, global clinical status, and underlying AD pathology. It recruits cognitively unimpaired participants age 60 to 75 years, with at least one APOE4 allele, and if heterozygous for this gene, with evidence of elevated levels of amyloid in the brain. The study will consist of approximately 2,000 participants who will receive treatment for at least 60 months, and for a maximum of 84 months.

Upcoming: Roche Graduate Study, WN29922

- This phase III multicenter, double-blind, placebo-controlled study evaluates the efficacy and safety of the investigational drug gantenerumab compared with placebo in patients with early (prodromal to mild) Alzheimer's disease. The study plans to enroll approximately 760 participants worldwide. Eligible patients must be age 50–90 years inclusive and must show evidence of beta amyloid pathology. The duration of the study is 104 weeks of treatment, plus follow up visits at 14 and 50 weeks after the final dose of study drug.

SUMMIT PAIN ALLIANCE

392 Tesconi Ct., Santa Rosa
Contact: Leny Engman
707-623-9803, Ext 118
leny.engman@summitpainalliance.com

Upper back and/or trunk pain

- Efficacy of spinal cord stimulator to treat patients with upper back axial and/or radicular thoracic pain.

Lower back and/or leg pain

- Post-market clinical trial comparing Ultra-High versus traditional pulse widths using ALGOVITA® SCS system High Fidelity stimulation treatment.

SYNEXUS RESEARCH

4720 Hoen Ave., Santa Rosa
Contact: Vicki Lynch
707-542-1469
victoria.lynch@synexus-us.com

Psoriasis

- 24 week study to assess the safety and efficacy of tepilamide fumarate in adults with moderate to severe plaque psoriasis.

Diabetic Kidney Disease

- Finerenone versus SOC on the reduction of cardiovascular morbidity in adults with type 2 diabetes and clinical diagnosis of diabetic kidney disease.

Statin Intolerance

- Effects of bempedoic acid in the occurrence of major cardiovascular events in patient with, or at high risk for, cardiovascular disease, who are statin intolerant.

ST. JOSEPH HERITAGE HEALTH

3555 Round Barn Circle, Santa Rosa
Contact: Kim Young
707-521-3814
kimberly.young@stjoe.org

Bladder cancer

- Chemotherapy versus combination checkpoint inhibitor therapy in metastatic bladder cancer.
- Durvalumab in locally-advanced and metastatic bladder cancer.

Breast cancer

- Post-operative adjuvant NeuVax vaccine and Herceptin in patients with high risk HER2+ tumors.

- BriaVax vaccine for patients with metastatic breast cancer.
- Capecitabine with or without an oral taxane in ER+/HER2- metastatic breast cancer.
- Post-operative study of genetic risk factors in lymphedema (UCSF).

Colon cancer
- Chemotherapy with or without a stem cell inhibitor for patients with metastatic colon cancer.

Endometrial cancer
- Sodium cridanimod and progestins in metastatic or recurrent endometrial cancer.

Head and neck cancer
- Chemo/radiation with or without pembrolizumab for locally advanced head and neck cancer.

Kidney cancer
- Cabozantinib with or without a glutaminase inhibitor in relapsed renal cell carcinoma.

Lung cancer
- Pre-operative chemotherapy with or without pembrolizumab for resectable stage IIB/IIIA disease.
- Post-operative adjuvant chemotherapy plus a third-generation tyrosine kinase inhibitor.
- ErbB3 receptor blockade in patients with heregulin-expressing metastatic lung cancer.
- Maintenance therapy with rovalpituzumab following chemotherapy for small cell lung cancer.
- A Notch receptor inhibitor (rovalpituzumab) versus chemotherapy in recurrent small cell lung cancer.
- Biomarker study of concordance between non-invasive and tissue testing for EGFR T790M mutation.
- Pembrolizumab with or without interleukin-10 in first line metastatic disease with high PDL1 expression.
- Nivolumab with or without interleukin-10 in second line metastatic disease with low PDL1 expression.
- Osimertinib with or without a CDK4/6 inhibitor in metastatic lung cancer containing an EGFR mutation.
- Platinum/pemetrexed with or without pembrolizumab in EGFR-mutated, TKI-resistant, metastatic dz.

Lymphoma
- A novel PI3K inhibitor in patients with relapsed follicular, marginal zone or mantle cell lymphoma.

Multiple myeloma
- Pomalidomide/dexamethasone versus ixazomib/dexamethasone for relapsed/refractory myeloma.

Myelodysplasia
- Roxadustat for patients with transfusion-requiring low grade myelodysplasia.

Pancreatic cancer
- Chemotherapy with or without hyaluronidase in patients with metastatic tumors expressing hyaluronan.

Prostate cancer
- Androgen deprivation with or without enzalutamide in metastatic hormone-sensitive prostate cancer.
- Rucaparib in patients with HRD-positive metastatic castration-resistant prostate cancer.

Solid tumors
- Fruquintinib for recurrence in multiple solid tumor types.

Stomach cancer
- Maintenance therapy with a PARP inhibitor after chemotherapy for unresectable/metastatic disease.

Sheela and Tammra have been serving Sonoma County physician families with their real estate goals since 2007. Having been personally affected by the wildfires, they are committed to helping physician families through this unprecedented experience.

* *Expert Real Estate Representation*
* *Physician Relocation Services*
* *Luxury Home Specialists*
* *Consultation regarding Rebuilding, Lot Sales and Lot Purchases*

"Sheela and Tammra went above and beyond ... Their knowledge of the local market and intricacies of these transactions was invaluable. I highly recommend them to anyone looking to buy or sell a home in the area."
David Fowler & Hana Clark, MD

As our community continues to recover, you may be considering new possibilities for your home and future.
Please give us a call if we can help you assess your options.

Sheela Hodes & Tammra Borrall
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SCMA's **BUSINESS PARTNER PROGRAM** adds a valuable benefit for SCMA members. The program is dedicated to offering products and services designed to support the business and personal needs of practicing physicians. Physicians benefit from discounts and referrals to quality services, and partners benefit from ongoing visibility with the medical community. Exclusive, Endorsed and Partner levels are available to qualified companies.

The **SUPPORTING PARTNER PROGRAM** offers local businesses an opportunity to affiliate with SCMA. Our supporting partners are recognized as advocates of the medical profession and the contributions made by physicians to the well-being of our community.

We welcome the new partner shown below with a full description of services. **Complete listing details are available for all SCMA partner organizations at www.scma.org.**

SUPPORTING PARTNER

Financial Services

Edward Jones
MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING

Russell Van Sistine, Financial Advisor

With consistent use of an established process, Russell Van Sistine, financial advisor, and partner Amy Stang, branch office administrator, help clients navigate often complex financial affairs. This is done with care and close attention to details. Mr. Van Sistine and Ms. Stang work diligently to ensure a thoughtful, well-rounded and informative experience. Call and schedule a complimentary financial health check-up. See **www.edwardjones.com** and search for Financial Advisor Russell Van Sistine.

CONTACT: **Russell Van Sistine** • 707-542-7071 • **Russell.VanSistine@edwardjones.com**

Current SCMA Partners

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Exchange Bank
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Since 1890, **Exchange Bank** has been serving the local community through trusted banking, financial services and charitable giving. Exchange Bank differs from national and regional banks by focusing 100% of its charitable giving on the community it serves. In 2017, Exchange Bank and its employees contributed over $665,000 to the community. 50.44% of the Bank's cash dividends go to the Doyle Trust, which funds the Doyle Scholarship at Santa Rosa Junior College. Since 1948, the Doyle Scholarship Fund has provided $83 million to over 127,000 students.

BENEFIT: Exchange Bank has designed special checking benefits and discounted residential and auto loans exclusively for SCMA members. Our staff is available to review these programs and benefits with you—contact our Customer Care Center at 707-524-3000 or visit a local branch. Please indicate you are an SCMA member when you call; have your membership ID number available. **www.exchangebank.com.**

In addition, Exchange Bank has developed five Community Rebuild Loan Programs that offer flexible lending options to those who experienced a direct property loss during the North Bay fires. Our local, experienced lending consultants are available to discuss which program works best for your needs. Contact us at **communityrebuild@exchangebank.com** *or call Kevin Smart, VP, Residential Mortgage Manager at* ***707-541-1252.***

Medtronic
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Medtronic plc, headquartered in Dublin, Ireland, is among the world's largest medical technology, services, and solutions companies—alleviating pain, restoring health, and extending life for millions of people around the world. Medtronic employs more than 86,000 people worldwide, serving physicians, hospitals, and patients in more than 150 countries. The company is focused on collaborating with stakeholders around the world to take healthcare Further, Together. **www.medtronic.com.**

BENEFIT: Medtronic Santa Rosa partners with SCMA to provide fire recovery support for Sonoma County physicians and the local medical community.

EXCLUSIVE BUSINESS PARTNER

Home Rebuilding Services

HOMEBOUND

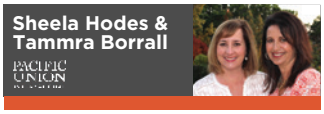
Homebound provides a start-to-finish concierge solution for homeowners who have lost their homes in the Sonoma firestorm. We will help you navigate your insurance and financing options, provide full design services, and bring you licensed, vetted contractors ready to build your home right now. We manage every step of the process, and leave you free to spend your time with your family, friends, career, and recovery. Lean on Homebound and know home is on the way. Visit **www.homebound.com/sonomamedical to see our special support program for physicians.**

BENEFIT: Exclusively for SCMA members: Homebound offers Informational Events and Curated Dinners; Complementary Insurance Optimization Review with one of our insurance experts; and a Move-In Service when you finish construction with one of our quality contractors. *Homebound also provides an initial Home Recovery Consultation (1-hour meeting with Homebound staff to discuss insurance, design, construction, and concierge services to make your rebuilding an enjoyable experience from beginning to move-in).*

CONTACT US at **rebuild@homebound.com** or call our Homeowner Support team at **707-244-1011**. Please indicate you are an SCMA member.

BUSINESS PARTNERS

Real Estate Services



Sheela Hodes & Tammra Borrall/Pacific Union: Business partners since 2007, we have consistently ranked in the top 1% of realtors in the county. Our priority remains quality over quantity; we have built a team of professionals who provide personalized service focused on individual clients. Over the past 11 years we have served the medical community in Sonoma County, helping more than 50 local physician families buy and sell property—and build connections in the community.

BENEFIT: SCMA buyers package: Professional services including home design consultation and comprehensive 1-year home warranty (up to $1,000 value). SCMA sellers package: Professional services to prepare home for sale, including staging, landscaping and trade consultations/services (up to $1,500 value). Contact us at 707-547-3838 or **Team@SonomaWineCountryHomes.com**.

Sudha Schlesinger/Pacific Union: Since moving to Sonoma County with my physician husband in 2007, I have been actively representing physician families in the local housing market. My savvy and experienced team at Pacific Union repeatedly exceeds expectations with customized marketing and purchase strategies; efficient execution; tough negotiating skills; and state-of-the-art marketing tools. Sellers receive consultations for home/landscape staging and buyers enjoy tours of housing, inventory and analysis of neighborhood, amenities and schools available.

BENEFIT: SCMA buyers receive an exclusive $1,000 voucher toward closing fees. SCMA sellers also receive a free Pest Inspection, $1,000 toward staging costs, and if selling lot only—a complimentary estimate of value. Please let me know how we can help you in this challenging post-firestorm market. **707-889-7778 or sudha@sschlesinger.com. | www.winecountryluxuryhomes.com.**

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SONOMA COUNTY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

Physicians' BULLETIN BOARD

IN THE NEWS

- **Northern California Medical Associates** welcomes physicians to three Sonoma County practices.

Sheryl A. Garrett, MD, joins Dr. Thomas Dunlap at NCMA Sonoma Cardiology to help meet the growing healthcare needs of Sonoma Valley. Dr. Garrett will also continue to be available in NCMA's Petaluma cardiology office.

Ali Yassen, MD, is a board-certified cardiologist specializing in performing cardiac catheterization procedures through the wrist (radial) and groin (femoral) approaches. He has completed extensive training in coronary interventions, including complex interventions and placement/management of temporary mechanical support devices for high-risk coronary procedures. He is also fully trained in all aspects of non-invasive as well as invasive cardiovascular care. Dr. Yassen is now seeing patients at NCMA's Fountaingrove cardiology practice.

Elizabeth Cedars, MD, joined NCMA on Oct. 1. Dr. Cedars practices the full breadth of otolaryngology—head and neck surgery, with particular interest in voice and swallowing disorders, facial plastic and reconstructive surgery, nasal and sinus disease, thyroid surgery and sleep surgery. Additionally, she has an interest in the study of patient safety and improvement in quality of care, incorporating these areas into her practice. Dr. Cedars will see patients at NCMA's otolaryngology / head & neck surgery / ear, nose & throat practice in Santa Rosa.

- **North Bay Eye Associates** has added new providers to the medical staff serving patients in Sonoma County.

Michael Saidel, MD, is board certified in ophthalmology and specializes in diseases of the cornea, refractive surgery and uveitis. Prior to joining North Bay Eye, he served as an assistant professor of ophthalmology and visual science at the University of Chicago, in addition to treating patients at the University's Medical Center and in private practice. Dr. Saidel is currently seeing North Bay Eye patients in the Sonoma and Petaluma offices.

Emil Shieh MD, a comprehensive ophthalmologist, has been serving patients in the Sonoma County area for over 20 years, and is now providing his medical expertise and skills to patients at North Bay Eye. Previously he practiced at Kaiser Permanente Santa Rosa Medical Center, where he performed over 6,000 cataract surgeries. Dr. Shieh sees North Bay Eye patients in the Healdsburg and Santa Rosa offices.

Alyssa Louie, OD, is a native of California and majored in physiological science at UCLA. She received her doctorate in optometry at UC Berkeley and recently completed her primary care residency at the San Francisco VA Medical Center. Initially she will be seeing patients in the Santa Rosa and Petaluma offices.

- **Sonoma Valley Hospital** and **Hospice by the Bay** finalized the agreement for Sonoma Valley Hospital to transfer its highly regarded skilled home care service, Healing At Home, to Hospice by the Bay, effective Oct. 1, 2018. Hospice by the Bay is a regional not-for-profit organization with a long-standing presence in Sonoma and Napa Counties and over 43 years' experience in providing healthcare in the home setting.

  The Sonoma Valley Health Care District board approved the transfer at its meeting on Sept. 6, following approval by the Hospice by the Bay board. "We are delighted to see Hospice by the Bay take over this service, which is important for our community," said Kelly Mather, Sonoma Valley Hospital CEO. "It ensures that Healing At Home patients will continue to receive skilled care services at home without interruption."

- **The Jacobs Center for Cosmetic Surgery** is pleased to announce the recent hiring of **Vanessa Smith** and **Dani Pesce.** Vanessa joined the practice in June as patient coordinator. She brings many years of experience in customer service (as well as having served as a medical assistant) to the practice. Dani is the newest surgical team member, having worked as an operating room technician for more than 15 years.

  In September, **Dr. Stanley Jacobs** presented a paper on skin elasticity at the European Academy of Facial Plastic Surgery in Germany.

FOR RENT OR LEASE

- **Quiet office space on lovely west Petaluma property.** Easy access off Bodega Ave. Dream setting for professional, writer, artist, or small nonprofit office. Access to Internet, waiting/meeting room, restroom, and additional storage room. Unfurnished with built-in cabinets and sink. 235 sq. ft. 7 days/week, $650 per month.

  Second furnished office also available with access to waiting room and restroom. Ideal for psychotherapist or individual practitioner. Up to 5 days/week, $300–$500 per month. Contact Emily Fitleberg at efitle@gmail.com.

- **Beautiful office for lease in medical complex**. Prime location in Santa Rosa with easy parking; prix fixe lease includes full amenities (wi-fi, PGE, janitorial, maintenance). Ready-made practice opportunity via neighboring referrals. Call Kendy Fallentine at 707-544-0141.

To post an item on the Bulletin Board, contact Rachel at 707-525-4375 or rachel@scma.org.

Medical staff prevails in legal battle over medical staff self-governance

By Tina Tedesco, CMA Staff Reporter

Tulare, California, is a small town in the Central Valley best known as the milk producing capital of America. More than half of its 60,000 residents are enrolled in Medi-Cal and served by a small, 108-bed healthcare district hospital—Tulare Regional Medical Center (TRMC)—with a separate medical staff of about 175 physicians.

Two years ago, this small agricultural community became ground zero in a high-profile battle testing the legal scope of a hospital medical staff's independence and right to be self-governing. Fundamentally, the question was raised: Who should be in charge of patient care and safety in a hospital—lay administrators or physician leaders?

In 2016, hospital administrators at TRMC executed a "coup" to take unilateral control over patient care at the hospital by terminating the entire medical staff and its duly elected officers. The hospital then adopted new medical staff bylaws in secret and without input from physicians at the hospital. The hospital installed hand-selected individuals to serve as leaders of the new medical staff, dictated standards of medical care, seized control of the disciplinary process without legal or factual justifications, and prohibited members of the terminated medical staff from voting on medical staff matters or holding leadership positions in the replacement staff.

The California Medical Association (CMA) supported the medical staff in its lawsuit against the hospital. CMA and the medical staff sought to enforce California law requiring all hospitals to recognize and honor the self-governance rights of their medical staffs. Had TRMC's actions been left unchallenged, it would have created a dangerous precedent that could have had a negative effect on patient care across the country.

This July, a favorable settlement of the lawsuit was reached that dissolved the replacement medical staff and fully reinstated the original medical staff, its officers and bylaws. The hospital also consented to a stipulated judgment agreed upon by the parties and issued by the Tulare Superior Court that, among other things, expressly recognizes that the 2016 actions of the hospital board violated the medical staff's rights to self-governance under California law.

"The Tulare case was not just about one hospital medical staff that was being wrongly treated by its governance structure," said Theodore M. Mazer, MD, CMA president. "It's about every medical staff. It's about autonomy of physicians to make medical decisions and the clear division of power between a governing body, which is administrative, and the medical staff. Making sure that the separation of powers, duties, and responsibilities stayed in place was important for Tulare and every medical staff in California, and frankly, in the nation," he said.

CMA worked with the medical staff's attorneys and filed two amicus briefs to support the medical staff and take on the hospital, which had loaded up its defense from three different law firms.

"This was a case involving 125 doctors. There's no possible way they could have afforded to prosecute the case themselves," said John Harwell, JD, the medical staff's attorney. "It's only by the collective action of organized medicine through the California Medical Association that this was possible."

In collaboration with CMA, the Litigation Center of the American Medical Association (AMA) and State Medical Societies provided significant legal and financial support in the California medical staff's lawsuit.

However, TRMC filed for bankruptcy before closing arguments in the medical staff's trial could take place, closing its doors and significantly challenging the availability of care to the community.

The lawsuit, however, enabled the medical staff to get its story out to the community. In turn, the community changed hospital leadership, which ultimately resulted in the favorable settlement.

As part of the settlement, TRMC has also agreed to:

- Not recognize the replacement staff, its leaders or bylaws.
- Reinstate the original medical staff, its duly-elected officers, with all the privileges, rights and status that existed before the Jan. 26, 2016 termination.
- Reinstate the pre-existing medical staff bylaws, rules and policies.
- Pay $300,000 for the TRMC medical staff's attorneys' fees and costs.
- Waive all rights to appeal or challenge the settlement's validity.

SCMA 2018 Calendar of Activities

AUGUST

10: PMF Lunch & Learn Seminar – "How to Hire Excellent Medical Office Staff"

21: SCMA Executive Committee meeting

22: Physician information dinner — hosted by Homebound

23: SCMA member reception — hosted by Exchange Bank

SEPTEMBER

11: SCMA Board meeting
- First review of 2019 budget
- Call for leadership nominations

26 Fire Recovery Resources Workshop at Medtronic — Dinner hosted by Homebound.

OCTOBER

10: Physician information dinner — hosted by Homebound

13–14: CMA House of Delegates

15: Editorial Board meeting

16: Women in Medicine reception — in Healdsburg

23: SCMA Executive Committee meeting

NOVEMBER

1: Latino Health Forum — SCMA event partner/sponsor — at SSU

6: Election Day for SCMA Board of Directors

13: SCMA Board meeting • MSSC annual meeting

15: PMF Lunch & Learn Seminar — "Managing Up" (see p. 17)

DECEMBER

5: SCMA Holiday and Awards Gala — at Vintners Inn, Santa Rosa

18: SCMA Executive Committee meeting

JANUARY 2019

TBD: SCMA leadership retreat

For updated activities, see *News Briefs,* delivered to your Inbox monthly!

Perhaps most importantly, the settlement allows for the hospital to begin the process of reopening its doors and once again serving its community.

The support of CMA and AMA enabled the medical staff to stand up to a large and well-funded hospital. In fact, AMA's contributions to the litigation in this case represent the single largest legal contribution in the history of the AMA.

"I learned a lot what CMA means. It's not only an organization; it is a partner," said Abraham Betre, DO, chief of staff of Tulare Regional Medical Center.

It cannot be understated how grave the consequences could have been on patient care and safety if the hospital's illegal actions were left to stand. Medical staff self-governance would become meaningless if a hospital can pick for itself a replacement medical staff and eschew the large body of laws and regulations that require a truly independent medical staff that is self-governing and democratic.

If your medical staff is interested in contributing to CMA's Legal Defense Fund, which is used to litigate cases of critical importance to physicians, please email Nathan Skadsen at **NSkadsen@cmadocs.org.**

The Importance of Medical Staff Self-Governance

Medical staff self-governance is a vital part of a carefully crafted system designed to ensure the delivery of quality patient care. This system recognizes that the hospital's medical staff is the only body with the medical expertise to conduct quality assurance activities integral to the health and welfare of the public.

Under state law and Medicare regulations, hospitals are required to have an independent, self-governing medical staff charged with the professional work of the hospital. The medical staff works with the hospitals to ensure quality of care and insulate medical decision-makers from undue influences driven by profit motives or other reasons unrelated to patient care.

To preserve this autonomy, medical staffs have a variety of rights provided for under California law, including the ability to retain legal counsel, elect leadership, conduct peer review, and manage a separate bank account dedicated to medical staff funds. Medical staff associations also have the option to sue a hospital, should they feel their right to self-governance has been violated.

"Many physician members of a hospital's medical staff often are not fully aware of the California laws that establish medical staff self-governance," said Long Do, JD, CMA Director of Litigation. "CMA offers informational materials and makes speakers available to educate medical staffs of the importance of self-governance."

CMA provides hospital physicians with a variety of resources to help medical staffs maintain and assert self-governance. If you are interested in consulting with representatives from CMA's Center for Legal Affairs or would like to schedule a CMA speaker on this topic, contact the CMA Member Service Center, 800-786-4262 or **medstaffhelp@cmadocs.org.**

CMA's Advocacy Secures $1 Billion+

In 2016, and with a $1 million investment, the California Medical Association (CMA) led a coalition to take on Big Tobacco to improve patient access to care through Medi-Cal, which serves one-third of the state's population.

California voters overwhelmingly approved Proposition 56, which added a $2 tax on tobacco products and stipulated that funds should increase access by improving provider payments.

California's 2018-2019 state budget continues to provide over $1 billion annually to improve provider payments so more Medi-Cal patients can access care when they need it most. Other key investments include graduate medical education (GME) funding increases and medical school loan repayments.

Since 1856, CMA has worked tirelessly to ensure that health care professionals serving on the frontlines of medicine in our communities have a voice in the development of health care legislation, regulations and policy.

JOIN CMA TODAY and support the next generation of physicians and the future of health care policy and business in California.

*"The California Medical Association is proud to leverage a **$1 million investment** for Proposition 56 into a **$1 billion annual return** on behalf of California's physicians, medical groups and patients."*

– Dustin Corcoran, CEO

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- 27 Specialty Societies
- 200+ Medical Groups

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Welcome New SCMA Members!

Ramzi Deeik, MD, Thoracic Surgery, 500 Doyle Park Dr., Santa Rosa, Creighton Univ 1995

Kaiser Permanente Santa Rosa Family Medicine Residency, 401 Bicentennial Way, Santa Rosa

Daniel Ayala-Ortiz, MD, UC Davis 2018

Julet Baltonado, MD, Univ New England 2018

Elia Cole, DO, Univ Health Sciences Coll Osteo Med 2018

Lauren Glaser, MD, Ceighton Univ 2018

Alexis Hoffkling, MD, UC San Francisco 2018

Tracy Krinard, DO, Touro Univ 2018

Northern California Medical Associates (NCMA)

Elizabeth Cedars, MD, Otolaryngology, 1701 4th St. #120, Santa Rosa, UC San Francisco 2013

Sheryl Garrett, MD, Cardiovascular Disease*, 719 Southpoint Blvd., Petaluma, Georgetown Univ 1991

Ali Yassen, MD, Interventional Cardiology, Cardiovascular Disease*, 3536 Mendocino Ave. #200, Med Coll Virginia 2009

Redwood Radiology Group Incorporated (RRGI), 121 Sotoyome St., Santa Rosa

Brittany Dashevsky, MD, Diagnostic Radiology, *Breast Imaging,* Albert Einstein Coll Med 2012

Chandan Misra, MD, Diagnostic Radiology, *Abdominal Imaging*, Penn State Med Coll 2012

The Permanente Medical Group (TPMG), 401 Bicentennial Way, Santa Rosa

Patricia Hiserote, DO, Family Medicine*, Western Univ

Joanne Tsai, MD, Cardiovascular Disease, Univ Texas 1999

The Permanente Medical Group (TPMG), 3333 Mendocino Ave. #130, Santa Rosa

Robert Neumann, MD, Plastic Surgery*, Univ Florida 2002

* Board certified
Italic = Medical interest

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CALPAC is a voluntary political organization, operated by physicians, for physicians, that contributes to candidates for state and federal office who share CMA's philosophy.

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